

Sovereignty, Election, And Grace (Part 6)

God Does the Creating!

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The last time I spoke I began a brief series on the position and importance of sovereignty, grace, gifts, salvation, and works. In order to get a clear picture, it is necessary to identify the terms in clear, simple, but true definitions that show the way they are used in the scriptures. In order to understand these terms most clearly, they must be perceived as within our personal relationship with a government. The government, in this case, is not a local or state civil government, but the government of God, who is the Creator and Ruler of His creation. Now for those words:

Sovereignty: Sovereignty indicates God's overall rule, including His awareness of what is going on, policing of the same, judgments, and control of His creation and purpose.

Grace: Grace (*charis*) is *favor* as related to the giver, and *thanks* on the part of the receiver.

Gifts: Gifts (*charisma*) is the way the giver expresses his favor to the receiver.

Salvation: Salvation is to set free, to deliver, to save or rescue from a difficult and sometimes an otherwise impossible situation for the one delivered.

Works: Works are the expending of energy (mental or physical) to produce a purpose.

Because of sin and its resulting penalty, man is put into an *impossible* situation to extract himself from, because the penalty is death. If he pays the penalty himself, "*that's all she wrote!*" We are confined to endless bondage to death. Life and all of its potential, all of its wonderful possibilities, is utterly dashed into hopelessness. But God, by means of grace, His incredible tender sense of our hopeless misery, favors us with rescue (deliverance) by means of a gift. That gift is Christ's sacrifice and forgiveness. We can then have hope.

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This grace is not merely the payment of death for our sins, but this gift includes the imputation—that is, God's accounting of us as righteous—by giving us *Christ's* righteousness as a bonus to the forgiveness.

Romans 5:20-21 Moreover the law entered that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin has reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

The gift of God justifies us. That is, it aligns us. It legally brings us into harmony with the demands of His law. It frees us from the death penalty, but it frees us on the condition that we are responsible for striving to keep the righteousness continuing through the rest of our lives. In other words, as we have been slaves—that is, in bondage to sin and death the entire time we were in the impossible pickle—we now must, of our own free will, give ourselves over to another sort of bondage—being slaves to righteousness.

In Romans 1:16 there is a word of explanation that is necessary to understand.

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation [rescue] to everyone that believes: to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

This wonderful liberty from the death penalty results because the power of sin and death over us has been broken by God and His grace. However—Here is the condition—this only applies to those who *believe*. I should add here, those who *truly* believe—those who are the possessors of what James later calls "*living faith*," and *living faith* will trust. And so it is not something that is just a mental agreement with, but actually a mental agreement with the *carrying out* of requirements that show that one trusts. Those who believe will give evidence that God is continuing to work in them. They will change. Good works will be the evidence.

Turn back again to Romans 6:1. Remember, this follows right on the heels of Romans 5:21 where it says, "That as sin has reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Now comes the condition.

Romans 6:1-2 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer

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therein?

Romans 6:14-15 For sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. [Or Certainly not!]

This is a reality that those delivered must face. Despite justification, life goes on even though one believes and is forgiven. At this point, justification and imputed righteousness is all that one has, and choices—more opportunities to sin—begin to occur immediately, thus presenting us with a possibility of putting us right back into the pickle, and they keep on arising. It is grace and *charisma* (gifts—especially the gift of God's Holy Spirit) that break sin's dominance. For grace to remain dominant, its influence must continue beyond justification. That's what we just read in Romans 6. For grace to remain dominant in our lives—dominant in the choices we make—its influence must continue beyond justification. Just a few minutes ago I said that it was God's grace that broke the dominance of sin and death that we were held in. Now for grace to remain in that position, its influence must continue beyond just being justified.

Romans 8:28-32 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

This section is very important for us to understand. The overall subject of this paragraph is the *continuation* of God's plan *beyond* justification in our lives so that His purpose is completed. Notice that His overall purpose for His intervening in our lives is stated in verse 29. Let's read that again.

Romans 8:29 For whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

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We are being transformed into the image of His Son. Now sin's dominance is broken, but transformation does not occur in an instant. Transformation is a work in progress.

The second thing I want us to notice is the series of terms given in verse 30.

Romans 8:30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

These terms represent the stages that a believer progresses through in the outworking of God's plan to bring about the completion of His purpose. We are not yet glorified, and the purpose is not yet completed in our lives. I want you to also notice that *sanctification unto holiness* is not listed. This is very definitely a stage, and it is the one that we are in right now.

Most commentators who touch on this absence of the word *sanctification* feel that Paul did not overlook it, but that he just included it within the general term "justification," because sanctification is very clearly mentioned in others of Paul's writings. We ran into something like this in my last sermon in that I was going through all these things that Paul wrote, and never once in what he wrote there in the book of Romans did he say that these things only pertain to those who believe. It was stated elsewhere. The same principle is true here. Sanctification is not mentioned, but it *is* mentioned elsewhere, and we have to put it right in there.

The third thing I want us to think about is the very famous statement that is made in verse 28. Everybody who calls himself a Christian probably knows this verse.

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

First we need to notice that this promise is qualified as pertaining **only** to those who possess the twin requirements of "loving God" and "being one of *the called*." In order for one to love God, he must be keeping His commandments. There are good reasons for why this can be stated dogmatically, and I will give them to you even though I know that you know you are aware of them. I John 5:3 is a very clear statement.

I John 5:3 For this *is* the love of God, that we keep His commandments.

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I John 2:4-5 He that says, I know him, and keeps not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whosoever keeps his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.

The commandments are the subject, and the commandments are His word in this context. That statement—"love is perfected"—is very interesting in that it reveals a work in progress. Perfection is going on. We are not perfect yet. Now we want to add one more verse to this. Turn to John 14:15 where Jesus said:

John 14:15 If you love me, keep my commandments.

That is one of the qualifications necessary for being a beneficiary of the promise that is given in Romans 8:28. We have to *love* God, which means we have to be keeping His commandments. All of this fits in with the *good works* being the evidence that God is truly living in us. He is creating us in Christ Jesus, and God's workmanship is being displayed by the good works of loving Christ, which is *keeping His commandments*. It was bad works, evil works—sin—that got us into the impossible pickle, and the good works of keeping God's law must replace those bad works, and those who love Him are His slaves to righteousness, because love *is* righteousness. Keeping the commandments *is* righteousness.

Psalms 119:172 My tongue shall speak of your word: for all your commandments are righteousness.

Now back in thought to Romans 8:28. The second thing about this promise to understand is that it applies first and foremost to the *outworking*—the completion of God's plan and purpose. Let's understand this: All things work together in our lives toward *that* end. All things work together for good to the outworking of God's purpose of transforming us into the image of Jesus Christ. It does not mean that everything that happens to us is good, but the Sovereign God is nonetheless watching the store, as we would say, and He has the power to control so that some measure of good might be brought even from bad things. Now bad things sometimes result from our own stupid, foolish, imprudent, irresponsible, immature, and sometimes downright evil moral choices.

Let's look again at Romans 8:32. The beginning of the verse looks back on Christ's sacrifice that God freely, by His grace, gives us to justify and break us free from sin's

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power, thus getting us started on the way to the kingdom of God. That's where it begins.

Romans 8:32 He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

The verse ends with Paul asking, "How shall He (meaning the Father) with Him (meaning Christ) also freely (meaning willingly and generously) give us all things?" Remember, God's grace is manifested—that is, it is shown, it is revealed—by Him giving gifts. What is the reason He gives us all things? The answer has to be the subject of this paragraph. God will give us all things toward the completion of His purpose (our glorification)—our being transformed into the image of His Son.

Let's turn to Philippians 4:13, where Paul says:

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.

Now could he (Paul) cast a mountain into the sea? No. The "*all things*" means things pertaining to overcoming, growing, his preaching responsibilities as an apostle. Whatever came down there, he was able to do it through Christ. Why was he able to do it? Because God would *gift* him with whatever it was that he needed to follow through on his assignment. In verse 19, Paul turns it back on those people.

Philippians 4:19 But my God shall supply all *your* need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

This is a parallel of what we just read in Romans 8:32. It has a little bit broader application in the book of Philippians than it does in Romans 8, because in Philippians it can very easily be seen to include within it physical things that we need to continue life as well. God will take care of us.

Let's go back again to Romans 8:32. This is an important verse to the remainder of this subject—this statement that God will give us all things that pertain to the completion of His purpose. What we see here is one of the first instances in Paul's argument that grace's influence carries on beyond our calling, initial forgiveness, and justification. Remember, *charisma* is an extension of *charis*. *Charis* is the favor; *charisma* is the giving of gifts—the giving of what we need.

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So with justification, God's purpose has reached an important stage toward our being transformed into the image of His Son, but His workmanship is far from finished. If we're ever going to be transformed and glorified in the kingdom of God, we must be carried forward. I specifically chose those two words—*carried forward*—because this is what is written in Hebrews 6:1 where it says in the English, "Let us go on to perfection." But it does not say that in the Greek. In the Greek it says, "Let us be *carried forward*." Doesn't that tell you something? Who's going to do the carrying? Well, I'll tell you right now, it's going to be God. We must be carried forward to true holiness before we can be prepared for glorification.

Many occasions lie ahead for our need of the gifts to bring about the transformation. None of this in any way excuses our responsibilities, but our responsibilities are not the subject of this sermon. The subject of this sermon is what the Bible tells us *God* does, and what the Bible tells us *God* does, in terms of our salvation (the completion of the process), is that He does almost everything. But just because He does almost everything, this does not excuse us from our responsibility of loving Christ by keeping His commandments, by doing His will. I don't know how anybody could think that God's sovereignty and grace, which He freely gives, frees one from the responsibility of keeping God's laws (like the Protestant churches say).

It is during the sanctification-into-holiness stage that character building takes place. Now who does the building? This is the next step in this sermon. Who does the building? It is very important that we understand this clearly, or we risk falling into the trap that is devastating to our relationship to God and could even lead into us not being in God's kingdom. If we do not correctly understand our role since our calling, we may deceitfully and inexorably be led by human nature into thinking that our works are responsible for building the character. It is right here that some fall into the trap of creating a "*works*" religion by over-emphasizing what *they* do. I go back to the simple statement that I heard Herbert Armstrong give so often. "Works cannot save us, but everybody who is saved works." It's that simple.

We're going to turn away from Romans right now, and we're going to go to I Corinthians 1:27-31. These are scriptures that many of us have in our memory banks, but we're going to read them and understand them maybe a little bit better.

I Corinthians 1:27-31 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty: And base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh [no human being] should

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glory in his presence. *But of him are you in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom; and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:* That, according as it is written, He that glories, let him glory in the Lord.

I think that all too often we minimize what this series of verses is saying, because we limit its application to our initial calling. We say, "Well, God didn't call the high and mighty of this world," and we just kind of stop there. But did you see, at the end, he's talking really about transformation. "He that glories, let him glory in the Lord."

In limiting this to our initial calling, we fail to understand that the principle taught in these verses applies to the *entirety* of God's transformation of us into the image of His Son. Now the "God-calls-the-weak" principle applies all the way through from calling, to justification, to sanctification, to transformation—all the way to glorification. God doesn't want us to remain weak though, so He favors us with gifts during our relationship with Him in order to enable us to become strong, to become mature, to be grown up. Paul is saying we only have these qualities that are listed in verse 30 because we are created *in* Christ Jesus, and because of that intimate relationship they become available to us as gifts from God.

Let's look at verse 30 again and notice that it states: "But of Him (the Father) are you (or we) in Christ Jesus, who of God [in other words, *Christ, of God*] is made unto us wisdom; and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." What Paul is saying here is that this entire process hinges on the actions of the Father. Because of what *He* (the Father) does, no human being can brag on the basis of what he personally has done in order to reach glorification, because without the enabling gifts of the Father and the Son there would be no wisdom, no righteousness, no holiness, no redemption, and no glorification.

There is a very clear, easily understandable portrait of the parts played by God and us given in Israel's release from their bondage to Egypt and their eventual entering into the Promised Land. I want you to consider this because, as Bill Cherry was saying in his sermonette quoting I Corinthians 10:11: "All these things were written for our learning."

I want you to consider these things that are shown by the Exodus story. First of all, who is it that initiated the relationship between God and Israel? God did. Who provided and prepared the human leaders, Moses and Aaron? God did. Who devastated Egypt, climaxed by the slaying of their firstborn, and broke the back of this type of sin's power? God did. Who divided the sea, held the waters back, led Israel through the sea, led the Egyptians right into it, took the power that was holding the water in its place and crushed the Egyptians? God did.

Who provided Israel with manna every day, and water when needed for perhaps two and one-half or three million people, thus giving them strength to walk? God did. Who provided the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, thus giving them the assurance of His presence and guidance every single day and night? God did. Who assured that their clothing would last them for the entire 40-year journey? God did. Who fought their warfare for them? God did.

Who gave them the design for the tabernacle, the laws to guide their lives, and an educational system to prepare them for the right kind of life? God did. Who dammed the Jordan River while it was in flood, enabling them to cross into the Promised Land, and timed their entry into the land just as the spring crop was ready to harvest? God did. Who caused the walls of Jericho to fall at the sound of trumpets so they could capture the city? God did. Who put the fear of Israel into the minds of their enemies? God did.

And finally, what part did Israel play in all of this? Israel is *our* type. They *walked*. In one sense, all they were required to do was to *follow* where the cloud and the pillar of fire went, and in submission to His government, walk where it led. So all they were required to do was to respond by walking in the wake of all that He did. Everything that *He* did set them up so that they could do what He required of them to do. He was out in front all the time clearing the way. But they failed anyway, because they didn't trust Him. They believed He was there, but they didn't trust Him. They trusted their own thinking instead, and they died. As Paul says in Hebrews, their bodies were scattered from one end of the desert to the other.

Let's understand a little bit more about what is going on in our lives. Turn to II Corinthians 5:17-18. Remember, the subject here is, "Who's doing the creating?"

II Corinthians 5:17-18 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.

Remember I Corinthians 1:30: "Of Him (the Father) we are in Christ."

II Corinthians 5:17-18 Therefore if any man be *in* Christ, he is a new creation: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation.

Let's understand the concept behind what is being taught us through Paul. The subject

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is that for those who are *in Christ*, they are a new creation, and that all things pertaining to this new creation are from God, just like Paul said in Romans 8:32. Now God, as in the creation of Adam, is the originator and source of this renewal that he is talking about here in II Corinthians. Now what is *the new creation*? We're going to go back to Ezekiel 36, and we'll see something here. I want you to notice the pronouns here. The One speaking is God.

Ezekiel 36:25-27 Then will *I* sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean [the ones being cleaned are the ones being worked upon] from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will *I* cleanse you. [Now here's the new creation:] A new heart also will *I* give you, and a new spirit will *I* put within you: and *I* will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and *I* will give you a heart of flesh. And *I* will put my spirit within you, and **cause** you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments, and do them.

Here is a simple and clear statement of God's intention. It's actually multi-faceted. I want to pay special attention to this word "*cause*." This word is the Hebrew *ashah*. It transliterates into English as *ashah*. (It's either *ash-uh*, or *a-shawl*.) It's #6213 in Strong's, and it appears 328 times in the Old Testament. This word has many nuances to it, but its basic meaning is *to make do*, and *create*. It comes from the same root that is used many times in the creation account in the early chapters of Genesis. The root is *asah*—a verb that means *to create*. *Ashah* is derived *asah*.

The primary sense of *ashah* is to produce something. When He says, "I will *cause* you," it means He is putting forth mental, spiritual energy to make something happen. The primary sense is to produce something. It indicates that which gives rise to an action, a phenomenon, or a condition. It means a person or thing that occasions something, or makes something happen. This reinforces what Paul directly stated in II Corinthians 5, that it is God who is doing the creating. It is He who *causes* us to submit to Him. This is what I mean when I say the Bible shows Him always out in front, clearing the way, so that we can do the walking behind Him. He enables it. He makes it possible, and causes it to happen.

Do you think that if God hadn't caused the death of the firstborn that Israel would have ever walked out of Egypt? If God hadn't caused the dividing of the Red Sea, do you think that they would have ever gone across? If God hadn't caused manna to come down, would they have had the energy to go all the way? He is always out in front making it possible—gifting us with whatever is necessary to enable us to walk behind Him. What a gift! But I'll tell you, that walking behind Him is hard enough to do as it is,

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let alone to be responsible for doing the creation. No. He's doing the creating. There will be more of this in the next sermon.

We're going to go back to Genesis 7:4. This is the first place *ashah* is used in the Bible, even though *asah* is used frequently before this time. In Genesis 7:4, He's talking about the flood.

Genesis 7:4 For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth.

Let's go to Ezekiel 36:33. We're going to pick up on this again.

Ezekiel 36:33 Thus says the Lord GOOD; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be built.

Ezekiel 37:5 Thus says the Lord GOOD unto these bones: Behold, I will *cause* breath to enter into you, and you shall live.

Ezekiel 37:12 Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus says the Lord GOOD, Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and *cause* you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.

Can any man cause it to rain forty days and forty nights? Can any man resurrect people? Well, just as surely, when God says He is doing the creating and causing obedience, I think we should give Him the credit for it and not think that we're doing it ourselves. It is the influence of what God does that actuates His kind and level of life in us. It is by His spirit that He brings about the changes in our perspectives, affections, and passions that influence us away from choices and attitudes that are foolish, irresponsible, self-centered, and immature.

I want you to also notice here that it is far more involved in what is being created than what we would normally think of or name as *moral character*. I want you to recall that David asked God, in Psalm 51, to *create in him a clean heart*. Now why? It's because the heart, as the Bible uses it, is the seat, the source of *all* of our thinking processes. The emphasis is on the word *all* of our thinking processes.

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Changing the heart changes the person. It changes the way we see and understand things. It changes our feelings about things. It changes our hopes and dreams regarding the purpose of life, and what we hope to accomplish in life. Therefore it changes our choices and decision-making capabilities. We must understand that this creating is not just a matter of creating moral character.

Hebrews 8:6-12 But now has he [Jesus Christ] obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he says, Behold, the days come, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

I want to add just a couple more verses to this that appear in Romans 8:3-4.

Romans 8:3-4 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Let's put this together. When Paul (or whoever wrote Hebrews) wrote Hebrews 8:7-12, he said that if the first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no place sought for the second. But the fault he said was with *them*. Now *covenant* is a singular noun. *Them* is a plural pronoun. *Them* does not refer to covenant. The flaw was not with the covenant. The flaw was with *THEM*. Now who was *the them*? It was the people. That is why I read to you Romans 8:3 especially, where it says that "*the law was weak through the flesh.*" There was nothing wrong with the law. It was with the people. They were weak.

The *new creation* touches on this because those people were not having a *new heart* created in them. The *new heart* is part and parcel of the New Covenant, and it is only those who are coming under the New Covenant who will have the *new heart* that will not contain the weaknesses the people had under the Old Covenant. But the *new heart* must be created *in us*.

I mentioned earlier that the creation is not just of moral character. I want you to consider this. Our stony heart is shown by other places in the Bible to be "*deceitful above all things*" and that it is "*incurably sick*." It cannot be healed. A new heart has to be given. The old heart has to be replaced with one that is strong in every area of relationships, that we may *qualify* to live life as God does. It is only those who have the *new heart* who are going to be able to live life as God does.

Is God only moral? Remember, we are being transformed into the image of Christ. Was Christ only legally moral? Well, He was far more than that. It is entirely possible for a person to be morally upright without being kind. It's entirely possible to be morally upright without being humble; to be morally upright without being meek; to be morally upright without being child-like; to be morally upright without being merciful; to be morally upright without being pure in heart; to be morally upright and still be uncooperative, competitive, cynical and sarcastic and cutting with our tongue. We could be a whole large population of Inspector Javerts, whose eggshell-thin façade of righteousness crumbled before the kind, sacrificial, forgiving heart of Jean Valjean.

There is far more going on in us than the creation of moral character. God wants children in *HIS* image. He is not only moral, but He is kind and merciful, and forgiving, and generous, and on and on it goes. He wants us not only to be moral, but also to possess wisdom and understanding, and have a winsome beauty of personality—the beauty of holiness.

Colossians 1:13-19 Who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell.

The pattern of creation and Christ's preeminence in the physical creation is blended together by means of Paul alluding to a spiritual creation. That, like as Christ, was the means to which the physical creation came to be. He is also shown as Head of the church, because He is *its* originator and creator as well, and thus Christ has preeminence in both. The new creation is being accomplished by the Father through the Son.

Romans 5:14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

Adam was the figure. He was the type of Him (Christ) that was to come. Now Jesus is similar to Adam in that He is the beginning of something new. From Adam came all of mankind, and all who came from Adam conducted life in the same general manner that he did.

I Corinthians 15:46 Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

These are different words, but he's saying basically the same thing that was said in Romans 5:14. The reference is to Adam, who was natural, and to Christ, who is spiritual.

I Corinthians 15:47-49 The first man [Adam] is of the earth, earthy: the second man [Christ] is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy [in other words, everyone kind of lived the way Adam did]: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

What Paul is saying is that Jesus is the first of a whole new kind, or race, or family, or kingdom of people who are patterned after His spiritual image.

We're going to go now to John 1 to just touch on something here, so that we can see more clearly Jesus' responsibility to us.

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John 1:3 All things were made by him [Jesus]; and without him was not anything made that was made.

You tie this together with the four verses that we just went through, especially Colossians 1:13-19, and then you see the pattern that is taking place. Just as God created all material things through Jesus Christ, He is now doing the same thing spiritually, and we are *their* workmanship. They do the creating. Just as surely as Jesus did the creating of the material creation, He is also doing the creating of the spiritual creation.

I'm going to read something to you from Herbert Armstrong. This is taken from *Mystery of the Ages*, pages 69-70. I want you to see what he understood.

So mark well this super-vital truism—that perfect, holy and righteous character is the supreme feat of accomplishment possible for Almighty God the Creator—it is also the means to His ultimate supreme PURPOSE! His final objective!

But HOW?

I repeat, such perfect character must be developed. It requires the free choice and decision of the separate entity in whom it is to be created. But, further, even then it must be instilled by and from the Holy God who, only, has such righteous character to endow.

This is getting ridiculous! It is so weighted! God does virtually everything. Let's continue the quote.

But what do we mean by righteous character?

Perfect, holy and righteous character is the ability in such separate entity to come to discern the true and right way from the false, to make voluntarily a full and unconditional surrender to God and His perfect way—to yield to be conquered by God—to determine even against temptation or self-desire, to live and to do the right. And even then such holy character is the gift of God. It comes by yielding to God to instill [meaning to introduce] HIS LAW (God's right way of life) within the entity who so decides and wills.

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Actually, this perfect character comes only from God, as instilled within the entity of His creation, upon voluntary acquiescence, even after severe trial and test.

Those of us who have been in the Worldwide Church of God—especially those of us who were in there for many years—have so frequently heard Herbert Armstrong's statement that we have been called to build character. We have taken what he has said and accepted it without seriously thinking through some of its implications. That simple statement—"We have been called to build character"—has unfortunately been skewed into many thinking that somehow we do the character-creating.

But that is a far cry from what Herbert Armstrong wrote in his final writing in *Mystery of the Ages*. It shows that he clearly believed that God builds the character. He used "supreme feat of accomplishment for God" one time; "only from God" one time; "created by God" one time; "gift" one time; "endow" one time; "instill" one time; and "instilled" two times—all in relation to God doing the creating.

Genesis 1:26 is a simple, clear statement of the source of all creation and God's purpose: "Let us create man in our image." We know this, but we want to be sure that we emphasize in the correct manner, or we will skew that clear statement. God is the Creator. The created thing—be it plant, animal, man, or character—does not create itself. God creates, and just like Israel in the wilderness, the most we do is respond, as typified by Israel's *walking*...and that is hard enough to do.

I'm going to give you another clear, plain, simple statement showing the same principle, but in regard this time to producing fruit.

John 15:2-5 Every branch in me that bears not fruit he takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, he purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches: He that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: *for without me you can do nothing.*

II Corinthians 3:5 says virtually the same thing. We will not go to that. The world says that Genesis 3 reveals the history of the fall of man. Brethren, it does no such thing. What it does reveal is that man, in his natural state, as he is born and lives until his

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calling, is *incomplete*. Another way of illustrating this is by using a building metaphor. The foundation is laid in the natural man, and when the calling is made, the creation—the building of the super-structure—begins. You have never ever in your lifetime witnessed a building build and create itself. Genesis 3 reveals that God's creation of man is not yet finished.

Let's finish this sermon in Philippians 1:6. We're breaking into a sentence here.

Philippians 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 2:12-13 Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

These scriptures either mean what they say, or they don't, and if they don't, every other scripture in the Bible becomes subject to also being untrue. But they mean exactly what they say. It is God working *in* us, both to will and to do. God is the Creator of character in His image. Only He knows exactly what His character is, and therefore only He can create it. If the character-building were left up to us, the best that we could do is create a greater man, and that would not be fit for the kingdom of God.

Do we have a part in the building of this character? Yes we do, and God willing, we will look into it in the next sermon.